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A RURAL RUSE



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A RURAL RUSE

A Comedy in One Act

BY

MARY A. WINSTON

BOSTON

Walter H. Baker & Co.

1893

PS 635
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CHARACTERS.

SOLOMON SLENKER, *a widower.*

AMOS BURNS, *Pansy's lover.*

PANSY WESTON, *a romantic maiden of eighteen.*

CONTENT WESTON, *Pansy's maiden aunt.*

SCENE. — A country kitchen. TIME. — The present.



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COSTUMES.

SOLOMON SLENKER. — Country farmer; wears shabby old clothes; rather bald; age, fifty.

AMOS BURNS. — An ordinary young man; plainly dressed; age, twenty-five.

CONTENT WESTON. — A lively old maid, with curls and spectacles; old-fashioned dress.

PANSY WESTON. — An impulsive young girl of eighteen. In first appearance, wears checked gingham with skirt pinned up; in second appearance, wears some pretty, light gown.

A RURAL RUSE.

SCENE. — AUNT CONTENT'S kitchen. *Window at one side. Pantry door at the other. Outside door at back. Furnished with stove, table, cupboard, large high-back chair, and two or three common chairs.*

PANSY (*discovered at wash-tub; sings*).

"I love my love in the morning;
I love my love in the night;
I love my love the whole day long;
And he is my delight."

(*Walks over and throws garment into clothes-basket.*) There, thank goodness, that's the last! Oh, my, but I'm tired to death! Guess I'll read a while and rest. (*Hunts in cupboard.*) Why, where — where — here it is! Such a jolly book! (*Sits.*) Aunt Content don't know I've got a new novel, or she'd be just crazy.

(*Enter SOLOMON SLENKER.*)

SOL. S. Hello, Pansy! * Aunt to hum to-day?

PANSY. Why, Uncle Sol! I'm glad to see you. Come right in and take a seat. No; Aunt Content is out, doing some errands, but I guess she'll be back soon. Come in, won't you, and wait for her.

SOL. S. Wal, I don't keer ef I do. My harness guv out on the way down Jim Parsons's hill, and I sez, sez I, I'll jest tie up my hoss in the meetin'-house shed, an' whiles I'm a-splicin' this gear I'll run in an' see the Weston gals a spell. (*Sits and begins to mend harness.*)

PANSY. The Weston girls? Oh!

SOL. S. That's all right, ain't it? You an' your Aunt Content might both be called gals, I take it, seein' ez she's a-bloomin' alone ez yit on the stalk, without no twin rose blushin' beside her.

PANSY. Why, Uncle Sol, you're getting poetical! How are all your folks to-day?

SOL. S. Right peart an' smart, Pansy. To be shore, when a man's blessed with nine beautiful sproutin' young olive branches, ez I be, there's bound to be some on 'em out o' kilter. But jest at present speakin', things is purty quiet up our way. All the younges'

uns hez kem down with the measles. Aella hez fell out o' a tree an' broke his nose, which made him holler some fer a spell, an' Euphrasy hez got a beau.

PANSY. O Uncle Sol, you don't mean it! Euphrasy Slenker got a beau!

SOL. S. Shore ez shootin', Pansy. That gal hez made up her mind to shake her old dad an' tackle onto another feller. I won't say but what I was ez much sot back ez you be when I fust hearn tell on it. You see, Euphrasy hez ben a-keepin' house fer me ever sense her second step-ma departed this life, an' she's allus foun' sech a sight o' work to do about the place, she hain't never hed no time to be fussin' with beaus. But Euphrasy ez a mighty smart gal, I kin tell you, an' when the right feller kem along, she managed somehow to git in a little courtin' between times, when she wa'n't nussin' measles er makin' butter fer market.

PANSY. Who's the young man, Uncle Sol? That's what I'm interested to know.

SOL. S. The young feller? It's young Bowers from Tipton.

PANSY. Goodness! what ever can she see in that stupid stick of a man?

SOL. S. Tut, tut, Pansy! Young Bowers is right smart of a chap, now, an' well able to pervide fer a wife. Euphrasy's gittin' a good husband. But ez fer me, gals in love is beyun' my comprehenshun. Euphrasy, now, ain't no use the whole blessed week. All day Sunday she's lookin' down the road, expectin' he'll come, an' Sunday evenin' she can't think o' nothin' else 'cause he's there. She's sleepy an' kinder dreamy Monday. Tuesday an' Wednesday she ain't no better—jest slimsy an' good-fer-nothin'. Thursday she begins to look off towards Sunday agin, an' mopes roun', an' lets the cat lap up all the cream right under her nose. Friday she burns the biscuit, an' goes off in the best room and snivels an' looks out o' the winder. Saturday she hez queer spurts o' workin' like all possessed, an' spurts o' frizzin' her hair. Ah Sunday she begins it all over agin. I declare fer it, wimmin folks is cur'us cattle. What's that you got there, Pansy? A book? I'm some interested in literatoor myself. Every one o' my young uns' names kem out o' the Greek dictionary. I tell you, I've studied it a lot, an' you won't find nine more elegant names in the hull United States of Americky. There's Aella an' there's Arety, which means—

PANSY. Yes, I know, Uncle Sol. But this isn't Greek. It's a novel—all about a girl who was in love.

SOL. S. (*in disgust*). About a gal, is it? Wal, fer my part, I can't 'low ez I'd keer to spend much time readin' about them. Gals is giddy creturs.

PANSY. Look out, I'm a girl myself, Uncle Sol. Oh, but I do wish I was a girl in a book. Real life is so stupid and humdrum. I just long for something to happen—something real romantic and exciting, something that didn't happen yesterday, last week,

last year, and always. I'm so tired of all the old happenings. Now, this girl in here (*looking at book*), had such a romantic time. She had a lover, a handsome noble one; she hadn't known him always. He came walking into her yard one day, when she was feeding the chickens, in a blue cotton gown, and her sleeves rolled up. He carried a sketching-box over his shoulder. He was an artist staying on a yacht near by, and he fell in love with her right off, but her parents were country folks, and objected. So they eloped, and oh, it was so interesting. Why can't something like that happen to me? I never feed the chickens now but I think of it, and try to look real sweet. But nobody ever comes — nobody, that is, but Amos. He's pretty sure to hang over the back fence and say, "Hello, Pan!" "Pan," indeed! Haven't I told him a hundred times that my name is Pansy, not Pan. But there's no making anything romantic out of Amos. He'll always be just Amos, and that's all. And to think he is the only lover I have, or am likely to have, and Aunt Content will have it that I must marry him. I heard her talking to you about it the other day, Uncle Sol.

SOL. S. Wal, Pansy, I must say, ye might do wuss, child, a sight wuss. Amos Burns ez a good honest feller ez gives two pints to the quart every time. I'd like to see ye hitched to so good a man ez Amos, Pansy.

PANSY. Marry Amos! Why, I've always known him! His back yard's always backed up to our back yard. (*Points out of window*.) I'd as soon think of marrying Beelzebub, the black pig out there!

SOL. S. Come, come, Pansy, ain't you a leetle mite hard on the pore feller. I ain't never hearn no one else call him a hog but you.

PANSY (*penitently*). No, that isn't quite fair. Amos isn't a pig — he never was, but always the same big, unselfish, dear old thing. (*Sits on table and swings feet reflectively*.) He always used to put the worms on my hook for me when we went fishing, and he would carry me over the rough places when we were blue-berrying on the hill. That's when we were young, of course. He was really quite nice then. But he is so tiresome now, wanting to make love, and putting notions in Aunt Content's head about marrying me. I don't want to marry him! I want somebody interesting, who will do something in the world.

SOL. S. (*going to window*). Wal, I declare, now, ef thet doesn't beat all! Thet consarned storm last night hez blown down every last one o' them bean-poles in your garden. Hain't you noticed it afore?

PANSY (*running to window*). No, you don't mean it! Why, so it has! Aunt Content will be in a fidget. We'll have to get Amos to fix 'em when he comes in to-night. (*Comes back, picks up book, and stands holding it*.) Yes, I want to marry somebody that can do something in the world. — draw pictures or write books or something. But, bless me! what'll Amos ever do but keep a little country store right here in Pitcherville? and what'll he ever

draw besides molasses for his customers? or what'll he ever write but bills which he never can get paid for? Dear me, what a prospect in life! (*Goes to table; prepares to sit on it; feels its legs.*) What do you suppose makes that table so rickety? It's fairly wobbly. Guess I'll ask Amos to take a hammer and nails to it some day soon. No, no, I know just how it'll always be with Amos. He'll go on always keeping store, and he'll always go on giving away taffy and gingerbread squares to all the little girls who come to the store, and pat them on the head and say, "There now, little lass, run home to mother." That's the way he does now, and when I say anything about economy, he only looks silly and says, "I can't help it, Pan. They remind me so of when you were just such a little one." And that's so stupid of him! Oh, why can't something romantic happen? (*Picks up clothes-basket and clothes-pins. Goes to door, drops basket, and runs back.*) Oh, my goodness! where's my sunbonnet? (*Runs around frantically.*) That wicked old pig Beelzebub! He's in the garden, rooting up all Aunt Content's squash and peas. He got out of that hole under his pen, I know. Amos *must* fill it up to-night. (*Exit*)

SOL. S. (*twinking*). Wants "some un ez'll do somethin' in the world," doos she? Wal, it 'pears to me like ez how Amos Burns doos stand a mighty fair show of gittin' his share to do; ef Pansy hez anythin' to say about it, thet is. Lord! she's mapped out three neat little chores fer him right here on the spot, all in one breath; sech ez sottin' out bean-poles, tinkerin' a table, an' fillin' up a pig-pen. 'Tain't likely pore Amos'll git much of a chance to stan' roun' idle.

AUNT CONTENT (*bustling in, falls over clothes-basket*). Pansy! Pansy! My land, where's thet girl? Here the hull afternoon's 'most gone, an' them clothes ain't on the line yit! Did you ever see sech a young giddy-pate? (*Goes to stove.*) Ez I thought! Fire all out, an' supper-time comin' on! Sakes alive! I must flax around! (*Hurries to lay off bonnet on table. Does not see SOL. S., who sits in high-back chair down front. Does see PANSY's novel.*) Now I want to know — ef that gal ain't ben an' got another novel out o' thet circulating library, an' she thet chock full o' foolishness an' silly romantichness now, there ain't no livin' with her! (*Hides book.*) There! it'll be some time afore she finds thet one agin. My stars, I don't know what I'll do with thet child! Her notions about romantic lovers an' all thet bosh is enough to make a body sick. (*Proceeds to drop off skirt of dress, and put on a calico one hanging up behind door. Throws first shawl and then skirt over back of SOL. S.'s chair, covering him. Goes to pantry for apron.*)

SOL. S. (*emerges from under skirt*). Wal, this is what ye might call the reign (ræn) o' the petticoat!

AUNT C. But it all comes o' thet heathenish silly name Pansy, thet her pore deluded mother would give her. It's a jedgment on us fer namin' any child so. Now, I wanted her called Mehitable Hanner, after her grandmother. (*Sees SOL. S.*) Wal, now, Solomon Slenker, what a start you give a body, I do declare! My!

you kep' still ez a mouse, didn't you? How air you all on the hill, anyway? Good gracious, Solomon Slenker, give me thet dress! I kem purty near endressin' afore ye!

SOL. S. You see, Content, you ain't give me a chance. You've ben a-runnin' on here so fast, thet a slow old feller like me wa'n't able fer to shove in a word aidgewise. You know, Content, I wa'n't never anywheres nigh you on quickness. Remember them times when we used to go to the little old red school-house together, nigh on to forty years ago, Content, — nigh on to forty years ago?

AUNT C. (*sharply*). Don't you set there a-remindin' me of how old I be, Solomon Slenker. I know all about it fast enough. (*Sits to peel potatoes.*) I s'pose you hearn my talk about Pan's actions. I deciare, I can't do nothin' fer worritin' over her contrariness. Now, Mis' Burns, Amos's ma, 'lowed to me a while ago, thet it was a perfect shame the way Pan treated Amos last Friday night at the strawberry sociable, when he's kep' comp'ny with her these two years. It's all along o' her romanticness; but land sakes, what could I do? So I unly sez, sez I, "Wal, you know, Mis' Burns, young gals will hev their notions now an' then." I declare, Pan makes me so mad, turnin' up her nose at Amos Burns, when he's the very pick o' the place, ez I've often told her, — a nice, stiddy young man; not much ez to looks, to be shore, but good ez gold. She'll never git no better husband. But I know ez well ez I want ter know, what Pan Weston is fixin' fer to be, — she's goin' to be an old maid, sure ez I set here. An' all I kin say is, "The Lord forbid!" 'Tain't thet I'm quarrelin' with my lot in life. Content is my name, an' contented I be. But there's some things about bein' an old maid ez is hard to bear. It's all well enough when ye air young not to be tackled onto any man, but when ye gits old, nobody wants you nowhere, an' ye air alone. An' I ain't sayin' 'tain't a forlorn lite to live. Now, I'm shore I ain't no fonder of a nice bit o' news than Mis' Deacon Jones, ner Mis' Storekeeper Smith, ner Mis' Dr. Green, an' I notice they every one o' em git right up into my very face, 'most, when I'm only givin' 'em what I've hearn from others, yit they turn 'roun' an' call me tale-bearin' Old Maid Weston before I'm out o' ear-shot. Old maids gits all the hard kicks in this world, I tell ye. Old Maid Weston I've lived, an' Old Maid Weston I s'pose I'll die. But I ain't goin' to leave the title to my niece Pansy — not ef I kin help it.

SOL. S. Wal, wal, Content, mebbe ye're right. But I must be a-goin' now, I guess. My advice to ye is, — don't worry, Content, don't worry. It don't pay. Ye mind me of a fussin' hen with one chicken. What'd' ye do now, Content, ef ye had nine on 'em ez I hev? What'd' ye do, Content?

AUNT C. (*simpering*). Lor', now, Sol, what a question to ask. Ef the Lord hed saw fit to send me so many, why, Solomon Slenker, I sh'd try to put up with 'em. That's all.

SOL. S. (*aside*). Ca'm an' cool's ever!

AUNT C. Hedn't you better stop to tea, Solomon? It'll be ready 'fore long.

SOL. S. Thank ye, Content, thank ye. I'd be main glad to stay. Victuals ain't much 'roun' our place lately. Euphrasy ain't sech a marster hand at liscuit ez she used to be. But I'll run over to the tin shop while ye're gittin' ready. I want to see old man Cole a minute. (*Exit.*)

PANSY (*running in out of breath; sinks into chair*). O Aunt Content, Beelzebub got out of his pen; I've been chasing him — and of all the contrary pigs in the world, he's the worst!

AUNT C. Pan Weston, what under the canopy's goin' to become of you, when you git so romantic you cut Amos Burns at a sociable, an' don't hang out your wash afore five o'clock of a Monday? I'm sure I don't know what you're comin' to.

PANSY (*wearily*). I told you once. Amos Burns tired me dreadfully. aunt, he's so stupid and commonplace. I'll go and hang out the clothes now. (*Picks up basket; exit.*)

AUNT C. (*begins to lay the table*). "Stupid an' commonplace," indeed! (*Wrathfully.*) My lady wants one o' them folderol courtships with 'moonshine an' stolen meetin's an' secret letters an' sech-like trash in books! But how kin she hev them with Mis' Burns an' me both a-dyin' to see them young uns spliced, an' a-favorin' it all we kin, while Amos is ez full o' common-sense ez an egg is o' meat. (*Pauses with cup in hand; then joyfully.*) I hev it; I hev it! I'll shovel the romance into this here courtship by the bushel! I tell ye, things'll be hot aroun' here! It's a glorious idee! I'd be willin' to bet 'most anythin' Pan an' Amos'll be merried inside o' two months! (*Fills tea-kettle, singing, "In the Sweet By and By."*)

PANSY (*shouting from yard*). O Aunt Content, I see Mrs. J. Bowen coming down over the hill, and if she hasn't got on a new dark green suit!

AUNT C. (*shouting from window*). Shore enough! Ef that don't beat all! An' they owin' Amos about two hundred dollars at the store fer provisions an' sech.

PANSY (*from the yard*). Jim Powers just drove by with that forward Mrs. Ayres in his new buggy.

AUNT C. (*from the window*). I want to know! They do say, though, that he spends most o' his time over there, an' neglects his wife terrible. I don't know what the menfolks are a-comin' to. They're all o' a piece, I guess. (*Enter PANSY.*) Even them ez you've trusted sence they was babies ain't turnin' out so good ez they might be.

PANSY. Why, aunt, what do you mean?

AUNT C. Never you mind. I don't want you to feel bad, so I guess I won't tell you. Now run along, child, an' tidy up a bit fer supper. (*Exit PANSY.*)

AUNT C. I've begun that air romance! She'll be a-wonderin' who I mean. (*Takes up knitting; calls.*) Pansy, that fat Mame

Green's gone an' got a new leghorn flat trimmed with dahlias, mind you, an' her face ez red ez a beet now!

PANSY (*returning with hair down*). What taste! (*Exit*.)

AUNT C. (*calling again*). They're all sick with the scarlet-fever at the Mosher farm. I see the red flag myself.

PANSY (*returning with waist unfastened*). Guess you took in the whole town to-day, didn't you, Aunt Content? (*Exit*.)

AUNT C. (*calling again*). Pansy, I stopped in at Elder Pressman's, an' their cow gives ten quarts o' milk a day, an' sech cream you never saw! I've about made up my mind to git my butter there stid o' at the store.

PANSY (*returning with skirt dropping off*). What'll Amos think, aunt, if you trade somewhere else? (*Exit*.)

AUNT C. (*calling*). You better git on to your room er you'll be ondressed afore you git there. Hurry up now, an' don't prink all day.

(*Enter SOLOMON SLENKER.*)

AUNT C. That's right, Sol, take off your hat. We'll draw right up, I guess. Pan'll be down soon's she prinks up a bit.

SOL. S. (*aside*). Now's my chance. (*Aloud*.) Your talkin' about gittin' Pansy settled fer life reminds me o' Euphrasy's intention o' embarkin' on the sea o' matrimony.

AUNT C. I want to know! Is Euphrasy a-goin' to git hitched? To who, lemme ask.

SOL. S. Ned Bowers from Tipton is the feller. Ahem! — Wal, you know, Content, I wa'n't never no hand to beat about the bush. My darter is goin' to leave me, and the next oldes' gal, Arety, ain't stiddy enough to keer fer sech a big family. The long an' the short o' it is, Content, I kem down here to-day a-lookin' fer a wife. You ain't foun' it easy to patch up matters 'tween Pan an' Amos, perhaps ye'll find it more satisfactory like to settle this here courtship o' mine.

AUNT C. (*aside*). Fer the land sakes! Ef the man ain't after Pansy fer his fourth wife!

SOL. S. You've knowed me considerable of a long time, Content, an' I ain't a hard man to git along with. Say ye'll give your consent, won't ye, Content?

AUNT C. Wal, Solomon Slenker, it doos beat all, your even thinkin' o' sech a thing! But I ain't sayin' nothin' yit, 'cause I kinder want fust to see ef a leetle scheme I've ben a-contrivin' is a-goin' to work.

SOL. S. Sorter looks ez ef some other feller wuz up to the same game ez me!

AUNT C. That's a right big farm o' yourn, Solomon, an' I calate there's sights o' work to be done on it. Don't ye think, Solomon, ye're sorter crazy to expect a gal kin take all thet keer on her back when she ain't been trained to it ez your Euphrasy hez ben? An' how do ye s'pose thet big family o' yourn'll look to a young girl?

SOL. S. (*in amazement*). A young gal! a young gal, Content! It hain't struck me nowadays thet youngness wuz a-goin' to interfere in this here business. 'Pears to me thet any one ez hez went to school —

AUNT C. (*interrupting*). Hez went to school! My stars an' garters, Solomon Slenker, you ain't gone clean daft, air you? You ain't callatin', I hope, thet goin' to school hez larned a young thing how to do all the work on a big dairy farm, besides takin' keer of a strappin' family o' eight young uns when she ain't ever had none of her own yit.

SOL. S. Without meanin' no disrespeck to you, Content, I will say agin that it's my opinion 't any one ez hez went to school —

AUNT C. There you go agin. I declare, Solomon Slenker, you'll make me mad shore enough, talkin' your fool nonsense.

SOL. S. Wal, Content, of course ef you will look at it thet way, 'tain't no use o' my argifyin' with ye. But I'm a man ez generally finishes up what I start out fer to do. So I'll jest say agin thet any one ez hez went to school nigh onto forty year ago with me, an' sot on the same bench, an' got lickin's from the same willer switch, ez I done, ain't jest what I'd call a young spring pullet, though fur be it from me to speak of the same ez an old hen, ez I might.

AUNT C. O Solomon, ketch me! I'm a-goin' to fall! I — I thought you kem a-courtin' Pansy all this time. An' it's me you mean.

SOL. S. Wal, I swan! I thought ye was gittin' crazy, Content. You didn't s'pose I'm settin' up to be that romantic swell dude Pansy's lookin' out fer? It's you, really you, I want, Content. You've owned up a while ago, afore you knowed I kem a-courtin' you, thet you wuz lonesome-like; an' ye'll be wuss when Pan gits spliced. Better say yes, Content. I'll be a good mate to ye, I promise.

AUNT C. I declare, I'm so took back ez I don't skercely sense whether I be on my head er my heels! Solomon, I didn't never dream o' this. I — I —

SOL. S. Is it yes, Content? Out with it!

AUNT C. Wal, then, yes!

SOL. S. All right. Thet settles it. Now, Content, I guess I'll take another one o' them biscuit, ef you don't mind.

(PANSY heard singing outside, "*I Love my Love in the Morning*.")

AUNT C. There's Pan a-comin', Sol; I guess I'll jest run up-stairs a minute, to kinder settle myself some. (*Exit*.)

PANSY (*entering*). All alone, Uncle Sol? Where's Aunt Content?

SOL. S. Set down, leetle Pansy, set down; your aunt'll be back directly. Hullo! here comes Amos up the walk. Run, let him in, Pansy.

PANSY (*petulantly*). Indeed and I won't do any such thing!

He can wal' in himself. He's done it before. I won't see him at all; so there! I'm sick to death of seeing him forever and always, and no one else. I'll eat in the pantry. (*Exit.*)

AMOS (*entering*). How d'y'do, Uncle Sol? All alone? Where's everybody?

SOL. S. Wal, Amos, don't you worry about it, but Pansy wuz took with a fit a minute ago, an' —

AMOS. A fit, Uncle Sol! Good Heavens! is she badly off? How can you sit there so cool? What kind of a fit was it?

SOL. S. Easy, Amos, easy. Don't you git excited. Her aunt 'lows she's often took this way; an' I'll give it ez my opinion thet it runs in the family. I reckon she'll come right out o' this one; anyways, don't you fret over it, Amos, fer I'll 'low right here thet it wa'n't nothin' but a fit o' contrariness. But ye mustn't build too much on airthly hepes, Amos. The good Book sez, you know, "All flesh is grass." An' so it is, Amos. "All flesh is grass."

AMOS. She isn't, Uncle Sol. She's a pansy.

SOL. S. And her aunt, Amos, her aunt is a daisy.

AMOS. Her aunt? Why, Uncle Sol, what's the matter? You're looking uncommonly jolly. Why, you don't mean that —

SOL. S. Yes, sir. That's jest what I mean. Shake, Amos, shake with a man an' a brother!

AMOS. I congratulate you, Uncle Sol. Long life an' happiness to you! I only wish I was settled that way myself.

(*Enter AUNT CONTENT.*)

AUNT C. (*in loud, angry tone*). Amos Burns, you here in my house! You dare to show your face before me an' my innercent little gal! There, sir, there is the door. Put yourself on to the outside of it, double quick! Do you hear?

(*PANSY appears at pantry door.*)

SOL. S. Tut-tut, Content; don't get so ruffled up!

AMOS. Why, Aunt Content, what have I done? What makes you speak to me like this? (*Moves toward PANSY.*)

AUNT C. And you've got the owdacity to ask me, *me* what you done! Leave this house now, this minute. I ain't a-goin' to hev any sech young whipper-snapper foolin' roun' my niece!

AMOS. I'm going. But I want to say first, to you all, that I haven't the faintest idea what I've done, or why I am driven out in this way.

AUNT C. There's your way, sir. (*Points to door.*) And don't you never cross my threshold again. (*Exit AMOS.*) There, it's time to git ready fer meetin'. I s'pose you're goin' long o' me, Solomon Slenker?

SOL. S. Yes, yes, Content, I'll go with ye. But fust I must see to gittin' my ole hoss some oats. I'll be back in a minute. (*Aside.*) Land o' goshen! Hope she ain't took this way often! (*Exeunt SOL. S. and AUNT CONTENT.*)

PANSY (*entering from pantry*). Well, I never — in all my life! What in the world has come over Aunt Content? I wonder if she is going crazy. This morning she was dying to have me marry Amos Burns; this evening she drives him out of the house. This is what she was hinting at all this afternoon, when she first got home. (*Puts on apron, and gathers up dishes for washing.*) Poor Amos! How sad and puzzled he looked! It 'most made me cry just to see him. My, wasn't aunt in a passion, though! But I don't believe Amos has done anything horrid — so there! I think he's a dear old fellow. That's what I think! I wonder how he is bearing up under it. How I would like to see him! (*Goes to door.*) Oh, there he is now. I can see him! How lovely! (*Puts head in at door from time to time, and speaks disjointedly.*) He is just walking across their back porch! Now he's washing his hands. No, he ain't; he's picking a flower, to wear to meeting, I s'pose. (*Comes in.*) What a good figure Amos has! I never thought of it before; but he has — such nice, straight legs! I'm so glad he isn't bow-legged like Ned Bowers from Tipton. Gracious! my dish-water is getting cold. (*Something is thrown in at window.*) My soul! what's that? (*Picks it up.*) Why — it's a — note — tied to a stone — and a rose — from Amos! Dear little rose! (*Kisses it. Opens note.*) Oh, isn't this thrilling? (*Runs to inner door, and listens.*) Aunt isn't coming! (*Reads note.*)

MY OWN DARLING PANSY, — I cannot endure it to live without seeing your sweet face. Can't you have a headache, just a little one, my pet, and stay at home from prayer-meeting? Then, when your aunt is gone, won't you come to the window, just a minute? It will be moonlight, you know. Forgive me for asking you to disobey, but I must see you. If you will come, put this rose in your dress, and stand at the door where I can see you.

Your own

AMOS.

(*Hastily sticks rose in buttonhole.*) Oh, where, which, what door, I wonder? (*Runs to door, then window, then to door again. Sinks rapturously in chair.*) There, now, I shall see him for all Aunt Content's mean injustice! Oh, this is just like a book! Dear Amos! There's aunt coming! (*Hides letter in pocket. Wipes dishes furiously.*)

AUNT C. Come, Pansy, git on your things. It's time fer meetin'.

PANSY. O Aunt Content, I don't feel well — ah — that is, I have a little headache. I don't believe I'd better go to meeting to-night.

AUNT C. What's the matter, child? You ain't ben eatin' them green gooseberries agin, hev you? Do you feel very bad? (PANSY *no ts.*) Then I guess I better stay to hum with you.

PANSY (*in a fever of anxiety*). Oh, no, aunt, I wouldn't have you do that for anything! Indeed, I'm not going to be sick. And you always count so on going to meeting. I shall be all right. I'll go to bed soon, when I've straightened around down here, and I'll be sure to sleep it off.

AUNT C. (*filling tea-kettle*). No, I'll stay to hum an' make some hot ginger-tea fer you.

PANSY (*aside*). How vexatious! (*Goes to door.*) You'd better get on your shawl, aunt. All the folks are going by to meeting. Mrs. Deacon Chiswick just went by with her little lantern. How ridiculous of her to carry that lantern to meeting, year in and year out! Just look at that great round moon coming up! It's like day out!

AUNT C. (*coming up behind her*). Mis' Chiswick, did ye say? Wal, I guess, then, I will go to meetin', ef you're shore you ain't goin' to be took bad while I'm gone. I want to see Mis' Chiswick about them eggs she was goin' to give me fer Tiny to set on. Better make that ginger-tea jest the same, Pansy, an' then go to bed. (*Exit.*)

PANSY (*watching her down the walk*). There, she's gone! (*Runs to window; is folded in AMOS's arms.*) O Amos!

AMOS. My darling! Mayn't I come in? This is so unsatisfactory! Can't I come in? (*Vaults in through window, and sits on sill beside PANSY. Both laugh.*) She said not to cross her threshold, but this isn't a threshold. It's a window-sill, isn't it? I'll be ready to jump, though if she comes. (*Hugs PANSY.*) Pansy, little woman, I love you. I think I have always loved you, ever since you were a wee little girl and I used to carry you on my shoulder. Pansy, darling, can you learn to love me a little in return?

PANSY (*in a smothered voice*). I do love you ever so much now, Amos. Truly I do.

AMOS (*kissing her*). Then, my little one, I don't care a fig for all the old aunts in christendom, and we'll get married in spite of her. Can't it be soon? I have waited a good while already. Let us say in a month. How does that strike you?

PANSY (*breathlessly*). O Amos, Aunt Content will never let me. She looks so cross and glum, she frightens me.

AMOS. Then, my darling, I will tell you what we will do. We will run away!

PANSY (*delightedly*). O Amos!

AMOS. I'll take you to Wayhampton at night, and —

PANSY. Oh, won't it be exciting!

AMOS. And we will be married there next day. Think seriously, Pansy dear, — do you care for me enough to leave your home like that for me?

PANSY. Yes, Amos, I'm just as serious as can be. See? And I do love you, you dear old thing — and I will elope with you to Wayhampton!

AUNT C. (*coming in suddenly*). Don't you think the old settin'-room to hum's good enough to be married in, Pansy, — an' there's your grandmother's white silk poplin, with white rosebuds on it, that she was married in, it's all ready an' waitin' fer you.

PANSY and AMOS (*in blank astonishment*). Why, Aunt Content, what do you mean?

SOL. S. (*enters and stands beside AUNT CONTENT*). It means, Amos, that we'll make it a double weddin', my boy, without no 'lopin', ner sneakin' out o' town.

AUNT C. It means that it's all a joke, children. Sol an' I was so happy over gittin' spliced ourselves, that I hedn't the heart to kerry on the hoax no longer. So I take it all back, Amos. You're the best young man in the world, an' I give you my one little flower, my Pansy, with a glad heart, knowin' you'll allus be tender of her. You wanted a romance, Pansy, an' I ain't hed no trouble in makin' one fer ye. I don't see but what it's worked ez well ez a' real one.

AMOS. Never mind, Pansy. You'll make it in a month just the same, won't you?

PANSY. Yes, Amos.

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